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The Conquering Christ

BY FRED SHERMAN BUSCHMEYER

THE world is looking for a conqueror. The eyes of men and women everywhere scan the horizon with the dawn of each new day to discern what they can about this all-important figure. For a world engulfed in strife and conflict looks either longingly or fearfully for unmistakable signs of the one who shall be known as the conqueror.

In less desperate days it does not seem so important to know who claims this title; all that men ask then is that they be left alone to follow their own desires, with only a minimum of concern for the issues of a world, or a civilization—much less the values of eternity. But when men from every land and every walk in life are suddenly brought to a sense of irreconcilable conflict for the very privilege of living as free persons, then the question as to who shall have the power and the glory that goes with being the conqueror becomes a primary consideration.

As we scan the horizon to discover who this figure shall be, I wonder if we look far enough. The fatal tendency has ever been to tire too quickly in our questing: to single out a man who in the nearer scheme of things seemed important, but who lacked the power to become in fullest sense a conqueror; or whose very power of conquering is such that it would be unbearable or unsupportable as a continuous rule of life.

I come to you this morning to proclaim the name of him who alone rightfully holds the title of the conqueror—the invincible leader. It takes a long look across the nearer interests of our lives to discover the signs that verify his claims. There is so much noise and strife and clamoring in the foreground of our experience that it is often difficult to see or hear the evidences of his power and right to conquer and to rule over all human life. But on this Easter morn the rising sun leaves silhouetted against the sky the outlines of an empty cross. This is the sign that points us to the world's invincible leader; to whom alone belongs in

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fullest and most satisfying sense the title of the Conqueror.

Those whose thoughts of leadership and power stopped with the schemes of betrayal in a garden of prayer, or with a court of justice which became the hiding cloak of grasping greed and clever cruelty, or with the spikes and spear that crushed and tore sweet human flesh—these persons thought the cross would stand to symbolize his shame and weakness and leave for them the undisputed right to shape the future to their own desires. But Easter morning came and from both cross and tomb there rose the answer to their cruel intent—an answer that comes echoing down the corridors of time wherever men think that they can conquer by such crude instruments—"He is not here, but risen; behold the place where they crucified and laid him. His has been and ever shall be the final victory. He goes before you, to lead you to eternal life."

This is the message of the Christian Church to a world that looks with disillusioned eyes for signs of a conqueror who can fulfill the highest and the deepest hopes of human hearts. The world has still its Judases, its Pilates, its courts of Caiaphas, and its men of mallets and of spears. They play the game according to their light. They win their silver, or their hope of favor. But they cannot win for long. Ill-gotten gain of silver leads to suicide of soul if not of body; and those whose right to rule was based on cruel power give way at last to him who plans a still more conscious betrayal, or a more sure way to kill.

There is no conqueror in all this. There is a shifting of position: a new enslavement. First one and then another wields the heavier sword of destruction, and claims for a time his right to rule. But rule he cannot in the highest sense. For the right to rule is won only by him who commands the inner citadel of man's heart and soul. No man is conquered until he surrenders gladly and willingly in this realm. This inner citadel is the last and most important stronghold in all of human life. No man has truly conquered until he holds this place. And this citadel should never be surrendered save to him who can fulfill its highest, deepest, tenderest and most noble hopes. Any who claims to be a conqueror, but lacks the spirit to fulfill these inner hungers of the soul, comes but as an imposter and a leader whose end is bound to failure.

It is in the light of these truths that I bring to you the Easter message of a Conquering Christ—the message of one who alone fulfills the requirements of the invincible leader—whose conquest spreads life, not death; and whose rule brings fulfillment, and not frustration. A leader who before men's endless rising and falling in bitter conflict can say: "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." A man whose empty cross against the sky of Easter dawn stands as an eternal symbol of his victory.

II

I suppose the reason we are so easily misled by the claims of lesser leaders, the reason we fail to recognize his regal qualities, is that we look for the wrong signs and tokens. Ours is the oft repeated tragedy of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. They thought the king should come with panoplied splendor and with brazen show of force and power. Like so many others they mistook the trappings for the essence of the King's source of strength and right to rule. The conquering Christ! How does he come?

He comes, like morning light,
To flood my life with love. . . .

He comes like rising tide,
To lift my life above
The marsh-land and the grasses,
Where broken hopes are cast
To settle in the mud-flats,
And be lost to sight at last.

He comes, like snows of winter,
Whose pure white blankets spread
In mercy o'er the scars I leave,
When thoughtlessly I tread,
Irreverently, among God's own,
And wait not to be led.

He comes, like dews of evening,
To refresh with spirit hand
The human hearts that fainted
In a stifling, sun-baked land,
Where angriness and searing words
The love of God have banned.

He comes, like flowers in springtime,
To break the earth's cold crust
By powers of life, deep hidden
In the smallest seeds of trust;
That answer death's "Thou canst not,"
With Spirit's brave "I must."

There is no noisy splendor about his coming. But his are the conquering powers. He wins at last because he answers the needs of our lives. The very meekness of his willingness to serve makes him the monarch of our broken spirits when we have spent our energies in trying to subjugate others to our selfish wills. His is the rule that cannot fail, because he comes not in his own name, nor in the name of any narrow group, but in the name of God, the Most High, who is the Lord of all life everywhere.

What evidences of his conquering power have we seen? At this season of the year there are literally millions of human hearts that bear witness to his power to banish the engulfing darkness of death. How dark this world would be if every home into which death had come were thenceforth left in the unfathomable blackness of faithless despair! It would be a darkness more inpenetrable than the blackest blackout man could make. But the light he lit, like one small candle at the first, has spread from life to life until above the cross and tomb there shines for all who follow him a radiance like the dawn of day. Death had caused the stoutest hearts to quail; or to wait in steely, stoic resignation. But by his conquering power we have been led to see a beginning where others saw an end; to know the love of a God who is the Lord of both life and death; and to live in confidence that "he is able to guard that which we have committed unto him against that day."

Here is a conquest won for all men; for every life must face, either "the last dread enemy," or the portal to a larger life. No other dares to claim so large a conquest in the interest of all mankind.

But we need not wait to find his right to rule at the end of our present life's trail. His has been the power to conquer the little ends and meager interests of life that bind us fast and tie us down until we become the prisoners of the unimportant, living only for paltry prizes, never rising to the heights of our God-given possibilities. He comes with a clear and personal call to break these bonds as he speaks to Andrew, Peter, James, and you and me. With two short words he

Fred Sherman Buschmeyer

puts into our hands the power to free ourselves from purposeless and little living. "Follow me," he said, "and to as many as followed gave he the power to become" . . . something far greater than they had ever dreamed they might become. More lives are lost in the lowlands of little living than in all the dangerous exploits known to man. Christ comes as the conqueror of all this wasted life, to redeem it by the power of high purpose and enlistment in the service of an invincible leader. He who can do this for each of us is certainly a conqueror worth the following.

As we have indicated already, many who have had the power to brutalize and subjugate have failed to be in truest sense the conquerors, because there is an inner realm where instruments of force cannot penetrate even though they pierce the heart. Unless there be a means of reaching across the barriers of misunderstanding, bitterness and cruelty that make men enemies, there can be no "ultimate conquest" save for the powers of destruction that then shall inevitably overtake every man. Until this means is found and utilized, mankind is doomed to partial living in the midst of constant threat and dread.

Christ comes with a forgiving grace that has the power to save the soul of the subjugated and the wronged from the poison of revenge and bitterness, and at the same time to redeem the lost possibilities of the life that did the wrong. There is no other power known to man save the power of forgiveness, which is adequate for this all but impossible conquest. Where men were ready to cast stones against a sinning woman, Jesus spoke a word of warning and a word of forgiveness to save them all. And his own prayer on the cross for those who killed his body but could not conquer his spirit, reached and redeemed hearts that could not have been won by blows returned in kind and quantity. Here, too, he wins the right to be called "The Conquering Christ."

Even in this day when all the world seeks its protection and security through forces of destruction, we cannot crowd out the evidences of his power to conquer; even though we prostitute that power, or make heart-rending testimony to its greatness by the circumstances under which we force men and women and little children to live. Christ comes with a message of our need of one another—of the fruits and values that can be won only by the kind of cooperation that doesn't stop to ask senseless questions about racial heritage or geographic location or social position or economic status.

We are brothers in our need, and in both the alliances being made between nations—even though for bitter ends—and in the extremities where rich and poor, learned and unlearned, share what they have against their mutual destruction, we bear testimony to the basic truth he taught: the truth of our need of genuine, brotherly cooperation, by which he would lead all men into a more abundant life. The tragedy is that it takes such consuming extremities to lead us, in spite of ourselves, to sense at least a portion of the truth that we must cooperate or perish. For all men are the children of one Father—God.

Our world has lived through a Gethsemane for a decade. Devout prayers that the cup might pass from us have been matched by the acts of betrayers of many kinds who also have been a part of this experience. Today our world is still a Golgotha upon which the innocent and the guilty are crucified alike, by men and nations who have not yet learned to live above the level of selfish cunning and brute force. But as on Calvary the darkness did not mark the end, so now there is a Christ who can arise—the Conqueror—if there are enough human hearts in which his spirit still may live; if there are enough men and women who, after Golgotha, will make a resurrection morn by the power of his spirit living in them; and will proclaim him the Lord and Conqueror of all life.

There is no other great enough to conquer by a power that can command the inner citadel of human hearts and hopes, and having conquered lead us on in heroic service for the common good of all men as the sons of God. To the conquering Christ belong both our endless Alleluias and our life's devotion.

The Long Procession

By David K. Barnwell

PALM SUNDAY, nineteen hundred and forty-two. Of what shall we speak on this festival Sunday? Well, what of Palm Sunday nineteen hundred years ago, the day itself, that began the festival we celebrate now?

Our Lord rode into Jerusalem, accompanied by his disciples, and by the converging pilgrim bands, coming from all the diaspora, for the annual Passover. The pilgrims always sang as they came up the roads to their holy city. This time the Galileans, with this extraordinary Rabbi among them, became the center of interest, and all the long-repressed Jewish hopes, emotions, longings, burst from their lips in song, and the enthusiasm spread, and soon the thing became a procession with Jesus as the center and symbol. So they climbed the hill and passed in the city gates. It has ever since been called the Triumphal Entry.

Looked at from the far perspective of near twenty centuries it may seem a strange affair. A triumphal entry, which was doomed for tragedy! Five days later the crowds which sang hosannas cried for crucifixion. Five days from his entrance as a king, he was killed as a criminal. It was a day of triumph, but beginning a week of Passion. The Galileans lifted up their voices in a hysteria of hope and joy. Before the week was out they were fleeing north to the Galilean hills, bereft, numbed with fear, blind with hopeless tears.

Palm Sunday—a strange affair to preach upon! On other Palm Sundays we have talked about the reasons for the tragedy that so swiftly followed upon the triumph. We have discussed the malign forces that brought the disaster, and have seen how these same forces of evil are operative today, and in all other generations also, to betray and to crucify what is good, and right, and hopeful. Surely these days we may see the forces of evil, of hatred, ill will, greed, vengeance, doing again their cruel work among men.

'CONCERNED WITH THE SAINTS'

It is not of that I would speak, however, *this* Palm Sunday. We spoke of the sinners last week, and have used the last two Sundays for themes of repentance. Today I am more concerned with the saints!

Recent times have made very popular a diversion called "debunking." To "debunk" is to go back and pull the glamor from an incident, or a period, or a person, in history, and to reveal the truth. Scores of biographies have therefore been written, supposedly showing up the heroes of the past for what they were. If you wanted to portray Cromwell, you must emphasize his warts. If Queen Victoria were your subject, see that you gave the impression of her general "dowdyness." Debunk the heroes, by concentrating on the defects. One of the most popular of recent novels did this for the American Revolution: "Oliver Wiswell" assured us that the Revolution was the work of a frightful rabble, and almost the only decent folk were loyalists, devoted to George III. The heroes of Lexington and Concord, of Valley Forge and the Wilderness Trail, were mostly hooligans.

Now, to be sure, debunking history has its values. It can be corrective. But alas! it may become a habitual looking for the worst and ignoring the best, and the final picture the debunker paints for us is fully as distorted as the one he started out to correct. Soon it is necessary to debunk the debunker!

So, it has been a pastime in some quarters to minimize the beginnings of Christianity. Some good historians have been pointing out that the Triumphal Entry was, after all, a very slight affair—a few peasant-throated hosannas, a shabby little procession of inconsequential Jews, bent on a religious festival like some small upstate county fair.

I grant that the usual highly colored Sunday school pictures of the first Palm Sunday are overdrawn. It was, certainly, not an event that reached the imperial attention in Rome. Very likely many folk in Jerusalem that same evening mentioned it at suppertime as merely a rather noisy demonstration of one of the larger pilgrim groups coming up for the Passover. It is quite easy to debunk the business.

A HISTORIC PROCESSION

But this morning I am venturing to say to both skeptic and man of faith: Take another look, friend, take a long, long look. Far from being an incidental little parade of a few religiously intoxicated zealots making an hour's festivity, it was the beginning of a long, triumphant procession that sweeps down the winding avenues of history with unsurpassed grandeur. Its leader was put to death, ignominiously, cruelly, within the week. You would have thought that would have stopped it. It *would* have stopped an ordinary, insignificant parade. Instead, it only dispersed the men for a little while, and then the procession re-formed, and went over the high roads of Judah and Galilee. Again and again the leaders were either killed outright, or stoned almost to death, imprisoned, ostracized. There was no stopping it, and within a few years it had marched over Greece and Macedonia, and into the imperial city of Rome. Folk of all classes, and races, and nations within the far-flung Roman empire, fell into line.

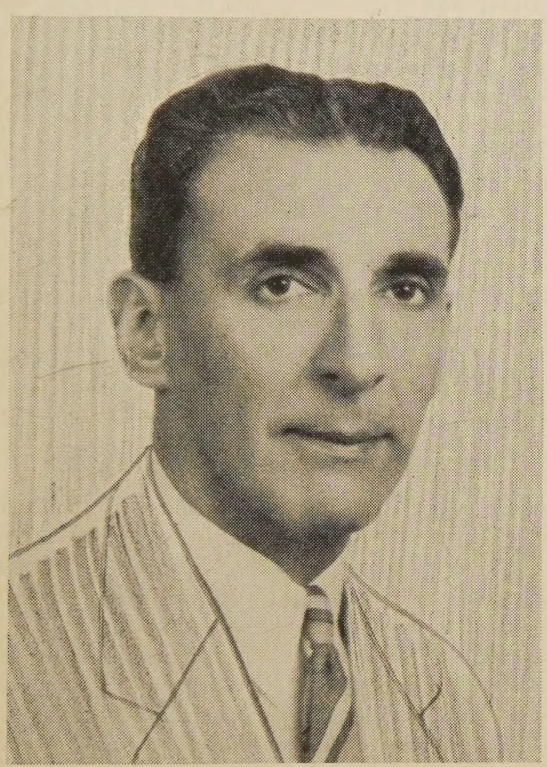
Within two hundred years the Christian movement was to be found in every principal center of the European world, and in thousands of villages. It had met with the philosophy of Plato and the ideas of the Stoics, and had absorbed the best in those two powerful ideologies and had swept on, a mighty movement in the spirit of man.

Two hundred years more, and the little Jewish sect that sang its faith at the gates of Jerusalem had become the acknowledged religion of all the civilized Western world. Then came the barbarian hordes, and imperial Rome crumbled into the dust, and all the culture and civilization that Roman rule supported, disintegrated, and night fell over Europe. Surely that would be the end of the parade! No. The legions of the Caesars marched no more. But the disciples of Christ went on. The only movement that survived the crackup of

Rome, and the decay of the empire, was the Christian Church. It not only endured, but in its monasteries and surviving churches it preserved the ancient classic learning, kept Plato and Aristotle manuscripts; and when again the world stirred into life, at the Renaissance, it was the learning of the Christian brotherhoods that stimulated and provided the sustenance for the awakening from the Dark Ages.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE ARTS

To be sure Christianity often suffered the bigotries of little narrow-minded men, was sometimes channeled into dreadful forms like the Inquisition. In ages of superstition, of course, it partook of the superstitions common to all. The wonder is that it survived and



Photograph by Bachrach

DAVID K. BARNWELL

shook itself free of these too human accretions; no other institution or organized movement did. And it did infinitely more than survive. It provided saints like Francis and Bernard, who sweetened and lifted the stream of human life in their day; its sacred cloisters offered the one humanitarian refuge for poor people, the one sanctuary and safe haven for all the persecuted of the bloody centuries. Its ministry became the hostels and hospitals of the Middle Ages.

And more than that! It was the mother of the arts: great music rose to provide its worship with song; Palestrina and Bach drew their inspiration from the Christian movement, and were part of it. Michelangelo, Leonardo—the one decorating the Sistine Chapel in Rome, the other painting the Last Supper in the Refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan—these were in the glorious procession, and of it. Then came the grandeur that was Gothic, and the medieval cathedrals arose, the wonder and worship of centuries of the toil and aspiration of men: Notre Dame, Cologne, Canterbury, Chartres, Ely, Durham, York.

Nor have we yet told half of the story. There were others—lonely souls like Francis Xavier and David Livingstone, who carried the march beyond the horizons of Europe, and planted the cross on all the continents, together with learning, and healing, and the soul's invincible hopes.

Still there is more, if there were time to speak of the growing concepts of the democratic ideal, resting upon the Christian evaluation of man, of the worth of personality, of the dignity of each individual in the sight of God. These things were a part of the procession.

Nor have we even touched upon the most sublime part of all the story—the best that never will in this world be told: the tens of millions, in all generations, of men and women and children, living simple human lives, doing their little stint, making their own struggle, sustained, lifted up, ennobled, touched to true humanity by the love of Christ, then moving on into the unseen, trustful that their times and their destinies are in the keeping of a divinely good love and purpose. These are of the heart of the great Procession.

Political systems by the thousands have had their little day; men have arranged and rearranged their economies; vast systems, imperialisms, feudalisms, capitalisms, have been operative, then have been shattered, modified, superseded. The Christian movement shakes itself free of them and moves on, confronting the new isms of each new age, and while they decay or change it carries faith and truth forward in confidence.

CHRISTIANITY A MOVEMENT

Now, why have I chosen to give you this swift reminder of the long pageant of Christianity? It seems to me that Palm Sunday is a proper time for our realization that our Christianity is a movement—or, as I have called it, a procession of life. This religion of ours has so many aspects that we are always needing to remind ourselves of its total meaning. It has, for example, many creeds, and sometimes some of us identify our Christianity with a creed. But Christianity is not a creed. Or again, being devoted to our particular form of expression, we readily fall into regarding our Christian faith as a church, an institution of particular forms and decrees. Religion must be, to a degree, organized to suit the needs and issues of human groups and periods of time. But Christianity is not a church, any church. No, not a creed, not a form, not a ritual, not a local or national or denominational church: Christianity is a movement, a flowing tide of spiritual aspiration, a vast procession of human life in response to one who said, "Follow Me."

You and I are living in an era when we need the pledge of the continuity of our tradition. Nothing is simpler, in times like these, than to feel hopeless, helpless, afraid of the future, a benumbing paralysis of faith in the human story. Multitudes are filled with foreboding. Well, surely we want no chirpy optimism, and I do not appeal for that. Appalling catastrophes may yet lie ahead. No one can look into the next few

months with careless gaiety. All the more necessary, therefore, to take the long look, to live consciously under the "aspect of eternity." Careless, thoughtless people are content to be drifters, heedless of the great issues, content if they can snatch an hour's merriment before the tides overwhelm them. In any period of crisis there are many who live by the hedonists' philosophy: "Eat, drink, be merry, tomorrow we die." Such people are of no help, they yield to the passing hysterias, feed the false panaceas that are offered, and weaken the basic structure of progress. They spin like weathervanes, with every gust of wind that blows. There were many such in the first Palm Sunday procession. "Hosanna!" was their cry then, and five days later "Crucify him!" was their hysterical scream.

THE SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE

We are thinking, instead, of men and women disciplined to more enduring things. Great souls are generally, if not always, those who feel themselves to be a part of the spiritual pilgrimage of the race. Their days have a certain dignity, for they do not regard the hour as a mere flash in the pan. They take their little places as those who belong to a great procession, and so they have a power and a simplicity that marks them.

Forgive a personal incident, for it may illustrate the thought I am groping to express. One of the little experiences that has always meant much to me is an hour that I spent in Ely Cathedral one Christmas holiday time. I had stopped off on the way from Scotland to London, to visit what is to me the loveliest of all the English cathedrals. There was an ordination service going on up in the choir stalls, and so I waited awhile in the aisle of that long, magnificent nave. Tier upon tier the Norman arches rise, and the pavements were stained with the color flooding in through the high windows on that sun-filled morning. It is very vast, and the sounds from behind the choir screen were muted and distant. Then, the service being over, the great organ swelled to the Recessional, and the big choir, the long line of vested clergy, followed by the small crowd that had been congregation, emerged into the nave, and singing, passed down the long way to the western doors, and so out into the morning. I stood in the shadow of the pulpit watching them, a hundred or so yet almost lost in the vast area of the cathedral, listening until the last reverberating echoes of the organ had been lost in the upper reaches, and silence came. And surely one belonged, for a few moments, to the generations of those who have marched, singing the songs of faith, from God's high altars, into the morning. One knew that one's life, fugitive, slight, was nonetheless part of a great and victorious procession.

LIFE SEEN IN AN AGELESS SETTING

Does this sermon have any practical bearing? I believe it does. But, for a moment, will you understand my saying that I don't just care if it does not? For I'm not always sure what is meant by that word "practical." Does it mean that one should always deal with immediate issues, with the small tasks of each week, the decisions of the hour? With the "politics of time"? I hope not those alone. Sometimes my purpose is not so much immediate answers to our daily problems. Heavens knows how few such answers I have—or any man!—but rather a purpose such as today, of just seeing our lives in their ageless setting, of envisioning to some little degree the long panorama of God's plans, or restoring a bit of the proportion that we lose so easily in the distortions of crisis periods. Sometimes a very practical purpose is served if we do no more than lift our eyes from the absorbing tasks of the moment, and just take a long look at far horizons, and draw a deep breath, before looking back at our close-up work. Perhaps that's just a far-westerner's peculiar love of spacious horizons!

I do know from experience that a long, tedious mountain trail is the better for those occasional spots where one emerges from the brush and narrow windings onto some little promontory where you see, far down, the small lake in the hollow you passed an hour before, or the little ribbon of water in the lower canyon where the trail began, and the steep ridge that you surmounted in the first hours; and then lifting your head you see far above the summoning peaks of your goal, where with patience and a steady pull you will have the evening camp fire, and sleep under the far stars. You draw breath, adjust the pack and start up with renewed incentive. It's just a view, a moment's vision, "time out," but it's practical! So today I would be practical only in that larger sense. Let us take a long look, take a deep breath and advance with hope.

THE CHURCH'S HOUR OF OPPORTUNITY

There is one distinction worth making: Don't mistake a big parade for the long procession. There are always "big parades," like the "hit parade" of radio. People looking for quick thrills are caught into the "hit parades," mad medleys of the moment. There are some mighty "big parades" in the world, just now. The strutting parades of the dictators who promise power, but provide enslavement; marching maniacs who offer a "new order," which is as old as the ancient barbarisms of the savage. They will pass, like the parades of Roman legions and the arrogant strut of the Caesars. "They that take the sword, perish by the sword." They spread corruption and death, for corruption and decay are within their breath, and they will die of their own poisonous stench. And the true, the good, moves on, at last undefeated.

Groping, sick humanity knows this. Certainly in my own brief span of ministry, I have never known a time when people were more openminded, hungry-hearted for some truth to lead them, some way that offers hope and ultimate peace. The Christian world movement never had a greater hour of opportunity. Even while all other institutions are crumbling, and nations go down in ruin, the long, inexorable procession moves on. Undaunted, it has faced Calvary before, and knows that the future belongs to that Man who rode into the city where evil waited to do its worst to him, and when all was done, moved on, the Leader of the Victorious Procession that mounts the bastions of time to the City of God.

The Words of Jesus from the Cross

By Ahva J. C. Bond

TODAY is Good Friday. At least that is what we call it. But we think upon it as if it were bad Friday, and act as if it were a day of defeat. To my mind it is a false and misleading emphasis to go sorrowing through a mournful Good Friday service, and then come up to Easter morning rejoicing that Jesus broke the grave bands and came forth from the tomb. The implication which such a procedure carries is that our salvation hung in the balance for a time when Jesus was on the cross. It is as if the whole life work of Jesus was in jeopardy, and that it is only because something happened on Easter morning, or the night before, that man can be saved.

I like what the Archbishop of York says about this: "We misrepresent the story if we think of the cross as a defeat which was afterward rectified by the resurrection. The cross for Christ is victory. The only defeat for him would have been that love should fail. If he had once yielded to selfishness, if one word of bitterness had escaped his lips, if any desire for vengeance had possessed his mind, that would be defeat. But love was true to itself through the utmost anguish and was made perfect through suffering."

I. A WORD ON BEHALF OF HIS ENEMIES

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. Luke 23:34.

Jesus' first words from the cross testify unmistakably to the fact that he has triumphed over the sin of the world. In the face of the blackest sin that could be committed, and out of the most agonizing pain that anyone could suffer, true to himself and to his great mission to mankind he prays: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The moment those words were uttered Jesus had already won the victory of the cross. Forgetting his own pain, and holding in the background of his consciousness for the moment his own disciples, and even his own mother, he looks with pity and love upon his misguided slayers and in tenderness prays for their forgiveness.

Some years ago the paintings of the French artist, Tissot, were exhibited in this country. One picture that was painted to give the artist's conception of what Christ saw from the cross, Bishop McConnell says he can never forget. He had always thought of Jesus as dying for a "Cause," and of Jesus on the cross being the center of a divine drama. Christ, therefore, was supposed to be looking down the future to the triumph of that cause. Tissot did not so picture him, but he made the vision of Christ on the cross just the procession of human beings—men, women and children, passing into and out of Jerusalem. Bishop McConnell adds: "At what else could he have been looking, if he was to act in harmony with his teaching and life?"

That is the point we should not forget today. Jesus perfected his work in the life that he lived. Of course his death on the cross completed the work he came to do, and sealed it forever, and for all mankind. But his sacrificial death and his triumphant resurrection had to follow the kind of life he lived. His sacrifice had already been assured through a love that never faltered and a ministry that never failed. My fear always in a service like this today is that we shall be fooled into believing that by certain observances of the church we shall merit divine favor, and that we shall go out from here to live our lives as selfishly as before. Some of the most unchristian movements in history, such as the crusades for instance, have been inspired by the church in its efforts to exalt the cross, while failing to understand its meaning. The cross implies forgiveness, which to be full and complete carries forgiveness of our enemies. This Jesus taught. But to teach it was not enough for our weak humanity. Jesus demonstrated it, and his first word from the cross was a prayer to his Father in behalf of his executioners. In that prayer are included all deluded, twisted and rebellious souls.

II. A WORD FOR THE PENITENT

Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise. Luke 23:43.

John the beloved disciple evidently was so engrossed in his own grief, and so perplexed and absorbed by his own personal problem in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus, that he did not observe the incident of the thief on the cross. Matthew, the other disciple who wrote a Gospel, simply records the fact that the robbers also that were crucified with him "cast upon him the same reproach" as did the head-wagging passersby, and the mocking priests and scribes and elders. Mark, who perhaps got his information from Peter—perplexed and baffled and following afar off—simply says that "they that were crucified with him reproached him."

But Luke the physician, careful and painstaking, Luke who doubtless got much of his information from the devoted women who keenly observed every movement and listened to catch every word, Luke alone records the following incident which enlightens our minds and cheers our hearts:

> And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed at him, saying, Art thou the Christ? Save thyself and us. But the other answered and rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man has done nothing amiss. And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

The crucifiers of our Lord were a blundering bunch. In their effort to humiliate Jesus and to add the last spiteful weight to the ignominy of his shameful death, they crucified him between two thieves. But their evil-designed act served as did every hateful move they made to reveal his kingly character, to promote his transcendent mission and to demonstrate the adequacy of his message.

Jesus had lived during the years as in the presence of the eternal. The transfiguration, when heavenly guests

talked with him, and the dazzling brightness of the glory world shone round about him, and the disciples heard the heavenly voice—the transfiguration was but a normal experience in the life of Jesus. The eyes of the disciples were opened to see on this particular occasion what doubtless Jesus experienced often. When Jesus spake of life it was ageless life; qualitative, and transcending all the accidents of earth. He never argued about immortality. He took it for granted, and lived it.

Now, at the last, a dying sinner turns to him, self-condemned but penitent, and Jesus, in the moment of bodily dissolution, speaks calmly, simply and naturally, not of death, but of life: "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

We speak of the narrow tomb, and think of a bound and shrouded body. Jesus speaks of the Paradise from which he had come, and to which that day he returns, having bought redemption for the world; and as if in token of the fullness of that redemption, he takes into the glory world with him a robber, now forgiven and redeemed.

The resurrection of Jesus is not our final proof of immortality. The character of his life even as it is revealed in this one incident makes inevitable his resurrection. We scarcely care what theologians may say with reference to the risen body. We know that Christ lives.

In the presence of such a moving incident at this particular moment in the life of our Lord, thrown against the background of his life as it was lived on earth, and of that Paradise of which he speaks, I am led to say with a dear philosopher friend: "On the whole I find it easier to believe in the future life than in the life that now is."

III. A WORD TO HIS LOVED ONES

Behold, thy son! . . . Behold, thy Mother! John 19:27.

"But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he said unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home." (John 19:25-27)

The *efficacy* of the cross to atone for the sins of the race rests upon the fact that it was God who hung and suffered there. The *availability* of the cross in atoning for your sins and mine is due to the fact that he who died there was human like ourselves. In other words, the Son of God, who died on Calvary, did something thereby which changed the situation potentially with reference to man's relationship to God. On the other hand, because Jesus was not only Son of God but at the same time Son of man, his conduct on the cross reveals what man himself must do to be saved.

Now, the motive back of God's redemptive grace is love. And the power in man which makes for his redemption is love. In nothing that transpired on the cross was this twofold office of love more clearly or more intimately revealed than in the provision which Jesus made for the care of his mother. Love moves God to act, and enables man to respond. Both functions of love operated in the God-man.

Jesus saw the disciple standing by whom he loved. This impersonal designation of John as the disciple whom Jesus loved may have been due to John's own modesty in referring to himself. But it not only points him out as the particular disciple addressed; it also describes him. It was the disciple whom Jesus loved who stood by; and it was because he was such a disciple that Jesus appointed him to be a son to his own mother.

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And let us not forget that this was a mutual favor which Jesus was bestowing—a blessing which flowed both ways. Because both were recipients of Christ's infinite love, and because both in turn loved Christ wholeheartedly, the common life which they henceforth were to share together would be one of mutual helpfulness and of holy joy.

This beautiful incident which is so rich in its literal interpretation, especially in view of the characters involved, is at the same time an epitome of life. In all our Christian living there are just three personalities involved. These three persons are Jesus, and you, and the other person. How these human relationships are exalted in this act of Jesus on the cross, and how they are sanctified when carried out in harmony with his injunction!

In the midst of great pain of body and agony of spirit Jesus speaks as calmly as if they were in the quiet home at Nazareth: "Behold, thy son!" . . . "Behold, thy mother!" In that same spirit he speaks to each one of us today, and calls upon us to care for one another.

This obligation no Christian can escape, and this joy no one would forego, once he has had the experience. And this message from the cross has its meaning for us not only in our home life, but also in all human relationships.

"And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home." What a peaceful and happy home that must have been! This new relationship was established at the behest of the Master. Often thereafter, when the horror of the crucifixion had faded, Christ must have been the subject of glad conversation; and always his spirit presided over the destinies of that household. And let it not be forgotten by any of us who profess Jesus Christ, that no matter what our benefactions may be to society at large, or what our public service, the measure of our devotion to Christ and the test of our Christian character are to be found in our acts and attitudes in the home. If in its sacred precincts the spirit of Christ rules the motives of our hearts and directs our conduct, then indeed will our family life be blessed.

But not all our Christian relationships are confined to the home. Life is one, and the spirit which makes for domestic peace and blessedness will carry into all life's relationships. That spirit will build proper church fellowships, it will insure intelligent community service, it will destroy hurtful prejudices, and will rightly relate the one who possesses such spirit to the very last man on the outer rim of his most casual acquaintanceships.

IV. A WORD ON HIS OWN BEHALF

I thirst. John 19:28.

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me. Matthew 27:46.

We cannot understand how Jesus was both God and man. But neither can we understand him by any other test or measurement. Unless he had come in the form of a man he could not have entered into our life in a way to be appreciated and understood. Except he were God come to our earth he would have had no power other than that possessed by multitudes of men, and could not have been our Redeemer. These things we accept as true. But even then we shrink from the thought that Christ should experience such extreme suffering.

Why, we ask, should the innocent suffer? Perhaps this looks toward an answer to the age-old question as to why men suffer without any blame of their own. We know they do. We have known it ever since Job argued it out with his accusers. Some suffering we can understand. We can all understand the justice in punitive suffering. And much of this world's suffering is punitive. Wrongdoing brings its own punishment. He that sows to the wind shall reap the whirlwind. He that sows his wild oats will reap a bitter crop. All this we can understand. But it has nothing to do with the suffering of Jesus.

We can understand and accept the fact also that suffering may be disciplinary. We have seen this also in human history. We have not only observed it, but we have experienced it. What Christian has not felt his life sweetened and his soul strengthened through suffering? In such suffering Jesus shared. "For it became him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." But this is hardly a satisfactory answer to his suffering on the cross. His last agony on the cross came too late for that. While suffering is often disciplinary—which may have been true of Jesus in his life development—this cannot account for his suffering on the cross.

There is still another purpose to be served by suffering. We call it vicarious suffering, which with Jesus was redemptive. This gives suffering a profound meaning. The agony of Jesus on the cross was somehow due to the sin of the world, and was calculated to affect the burden of man's sin, and bring relief and freedom from sin's awful consequences. And what if this suffering of Christ was a reflection of the eternal suffering in the heart of God! If suffering is redemptive, it may be that God still suffers because of our blindness and our sin. In that case possibly there is redemptive suffering in some of our own experiences. Then suffering may not only be bearable, but even desirable—not a curse but a blessing.

It was this thought that preserved Studdert-Kennedy's faith in God during the tragic suffering of the First World War, and turned this rebellion into adoration. Listen to him in his poem, "The Hardest Part":

The sorrows of God must be hard to bear
If he really has love in his heart,
And the hardest part in the world to play
Must surely be God's part.

Not just that he suffered once for all
To save us from our sins,
And then went up to his throne on high
To wait till his heaven begins.

But what if he came to the earth to show,
By the path of pain that he trod,
The blistering flame of eternal shame
That burns in the heart of God?

O God, if that's how it really is,
Why, bless ye, I understands,
And I feels for you with your thorn-crowned head
And your ever-piercéd hands.

We cannot imagine the suffering back of those two words from the cross: "I thirst." In that cry is all the agony due to the violent and mortal wounds inflicted unto death upon a healthy and sensitive human body. No wonder that for the moment Jesus felt himself forsaken even by the Father whom he had come to reveal, and who had expressed himself at other great moments as well pleased with his Son. But even this suffering had no sting, because he was without sin. He was innocent, he was noble and pure. His death was an atoning death, and his suffering was redemptive. We too can bear pain and endure disappointments, where we know no blame, and "fill up on our part that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ," in the words of Paul, and share in his redemptive work in a sinful world.

V. A WORD FOR THE FUTURE

It is finished. John 19:30.

Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Luke 23:46.

Again we combine two "Words from the Cross" into one word, for they belong together. And these constitute our fifth and last word. "It is finished." "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." When college ends, we very properly call it commencement. When Jesus had finished, finished what he came to earth to do, then began on earth a new day for the children of God. Jesus went back to be with the Father, and his benevolent and righteous reign could compass the world, and its blessings were made available to all mankind. For centuries the human race had looked forward to a coming event which was to be the most important happening in all history. It was perceived but dimly during the early ages of human history. But it became a growing hope in the hearts of seers and saints and prophets; and its meaning grew brighter as the centuries rolled by. Because men of faith believed the promise, they experienced in their own lives something of its blessing. But these experiences seemed to be for rare souls only, while to the multitudes came but dim reflections. The prophets saw more clearly just what this coming event would be like, and visioning it as the revelation of God through personality, they spoke of a coming One. Later generations accepted the prophet's cue, but missed his conception.

> They all were looking for a king
> To slay their foes, and set them high:
> He came, a little baby thing
> That made a woman cry.

God broke through the partition wall which human ignorance and sin had built up, and in his Son became a human babe in a human mother's arms. To the wise of earth this was impossible, so the rulers rejected him, and pious priests and learned Pharisees joined with them in plotting to take his life, which they at last accomplished. To simple shepherds watching their sheep under the silent stars was announced the Savior's birth. The wise men to whom the star appeared were not the worldly-wise, but were of those detached and meditative thinkers who search beyond the world of material things to find the truth, and who hold converse with the silences. When Jesus came it was revealed how near heaven is to our earth, and how familiar God is with our earth-language of sorrow and of joy, and with the whole range of human feelings and human experience. This is the revelation that Jesus made. And now "it is finished." "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Now he goes back to God the Father, having opened the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit, who could be with men everywhere and always.

May we listen to these calm and meaningful words of our dying Lord, now risen and living, with a sense of their true and larger meaning. May we turn again to our tasks with a new determination to make his spirit supreme in our lives, and in all human relationships.

Christianity's Mastery of Ultimate Pessimism

By Hampton Adams

IT is difficult indeed to master our present pessimism. The dreaded war is upon us. The world that we have known is giving way to a world that is strange and fearful. Once we thought our tomorrows were predictable. Now we disclaim any foresight and fear the worst.

There is the false and harmful notion held by some people that optimism of itself is a Christian virtue, and that pessimism of itself is evil. The contrary is often true. Optimism is sometimes sin; pessimism is sometimes begotten of the truth. An ignorant mother refused to let the doctor give antitoxin to her baby; she believed that her prayers would save her child from the ravages of the diphtheria epidemic. That optimism was of the nature of sin. Other mothers feared for their children and had them inoculated. That pessimism was a virtue. Optimism and pessimism are not mere qualities of the mind, although minds tend to either hopefulness or gloom. In healthy minds optimism and pessimism are related to the facts of our world, the facts without and facts within. When nations recognize their common humanity and work together for peace, there is optimism. When nations become unbrotherly and brutal, there is pessimism.

Facts are the bases for optimism and pessimism. We who have gained deeper insights into reality by the mind and heart of Jesus Christ are able to master pessimism and keep hope alive not by mere wishful thinking but by our awareness of facts, facts that the world continues to overlook—facts about the nature of God and the inner nature of man, facts about the moral order of our universe. But we shall reserve the further consideration of these facts that enable us to master pessimism to the close of the message, and turn now to an examination of current pessimism.

REASONS FOR PESSIMISM

There are, it seems, three major facts that should make a pessimist out of every person that has hoped for a Christian world.

The first is the return of war—we might say the perpetuation of war, since war has hardly stopped since 1914 even though the guns were silenced for a time. We know that war, though it may be inevitable, creates no good. We know that it begets evil; not only the evil of physical suffering but the evil of minds so distorted that they can no longer think the thoughts of God after him and work together with him for an order of justice and peace.

The second fact that makes pessimists of us is the superior force of evil. Stridently the forces of aggression have moved across countries whose peace-loving inhabitants were not able to defend their homes. And it has been not only since this Second World War started that evil has been dominant. How many times have we seen good men voted down! We have been

heartsick many times when the prize went to the scoundrel.

The third fact that makes us all but hopelessly pessimistic is the refusal of good people to work on all fronts for the Kingdom of God. Self-interest causes blind spots. And men who are otherwise good—good husbands, good fathers, honest business men, active churchmen—have allowed their self-interest to produce these blind spots. Because of this self-interest many good men are blind to the evil of whiskey, to the misery of the poor, and even to the sufferings of war.

Because of these major facts—the perpetuation of war, the superior force of evil and the refusal of

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good people to work on all fronts for the Kingdom of God—we are afraid that we are going to lose the things that are most precious to us, the things that make life worth while and bearable. We are afraid that we are going to lose our liberty. We are afraid that we may never again experience security. We are afraid that truth will no longer be respected. We are afraid that the sacred precincts of the family may be invaded by a regimentation that all but destroys the parent-child relationship. We are afraid that our altars will be torn down. This is our pessimism.

THE DECLINE OF SPIRITUAL VALUES

But the depth of our pessimism is not yet fathomed. Albert Einstein, whose soul has heard the deep thud of ultimate pessimism in years of exile while seeing the race of which he is a member persecuted and the right to search for truth denied, has contributed an essay to a volume recently edited in which he exposes the final pessimism. He says: "One senses not only a threat to man's cultural heritage, but also that a lower value is placed upon all that one would like to see defended at all costs."

Our greatest alarm is not over the possibility of a censorship such as has come into existence in Europe, that will keep the truth from us; our alarm is that people have put a lower value on the truth. The truth is not as important as getting the thing you are going after when that thing can be had for a lie.

Our greatest alarm is not that we may be ruled by a dishonest regime. Our alarm is that many people have put a lower value on honesty.

Our greatest alarm is not that our family life may be disrupted. Our alarm is that many people have already put a lower value on the home, evidence of which we have in their leaving little time in their crowded lives for the nurturing comradeship of the home.

Our greatest alarm is not that our churches may be closed by a pagan regimentation. Our alarm is that many people have already put a lower value on worship, the evidence of which we have in the infrequency of their attendance upon the services of the church.

Our greatest alarm is not that the machines of war may destroy men. Our alarm is that man has already put a lower value on his own nature.

Now this is ultimate pessimism. And its sickening slogan as it parades before every man and every woman, every young man and every maiden, every boy and every girl, is: "What does it matter?" What does it matter if the truth is denied? What does it matter if men cheat and rob one another? What does it matter if children are herded in railroad stations and shipped off to camps away from their mothers? What does it matter if churches are closed and men have no God? What does it matter if the nations' young men are killed?

MASTERING PESSIMISM WITH CONVICTION

To begin to master this ultimate pessimism our generation must have convictions. You cannot build a world without conviction. The poet Heine and a friend were gazing at the Cathedral of Amiens. The friend asked, "Why don't we build such structures now?" Heine answered: "Because the men of that day had convictions, while we have only opinions, and more than opinions are required to build cathedrals."

Jesus mastered pessimism with conviction. And while he did master his pessimism, do not think that Jesus was without pessimism. There was surely pessimism in his assertion that some of the seed would fall by the wayside where the birds would devour it; some would fall on rocky places where there was not much earth; some would fall among the thorns where it would be choked out; and although some would fall on good ground even that would have an uneven yield, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty.

How could he have failed to be pessimistic because of the failures within the band of apostles? Peter denied him; Judas betrayed him with a traitorous kiss. And it must not be forgotten that the multitudes left him after he had accused them of following because they ate of his loaves and were filled. Then there was the

open and bitter opposition of his enemies that finally possessed him and crucified him. And yet he exulted: "I have overcome the world." How did Jesus master this pessimism? This will be the Christian's mastery of ultimate pessimism.

THE GOD-GIVEN WORTH OF MAN

Ultimate pessimism, we have said with Einstein, is putting a lower value on things that once we would have defended at all costs. Now we need to see this truth: all values rise and fall for us with our evaluation of man. Truth, honesty, the family, worship—all of these are important only as man himself has value. Whenever you come to feel that man is of little consequence, that he is merely a worm of the dust on one of the smallest of the planets, the truth that you would have man speak, the honesty of man, the family of man, the aspiration of man, are but as the grass of the field. "In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth."

Jesus never allowed the value of these things about which we have spoken to be lowered; and why? because he knew the value of man. The value of man, according to the understanding of Jesus, was given to him by God who created man in his own image. Man could injure and destroy the image. But when he did his guilt was the guilt of sin. And the conception of sin is tied to the God-given worth of man. An inanimate object is broken, and that is an accident and a misfortune. An animal does mischief, and that is according to his nature. A man does evil, and that is a "fall" from his true nature—and since it is a violation of the highest of which he is capable we call the act "sin." So even the sin of man witnesses to his higher nature and to his worth.

When one comes to understand this worth of man by entering into the mind of Christ, he discerns with Christ that each of us is the object of God's personal love, and that love is independent of every world condition. It was this conviction that made the Apostle Paul exclaim: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

FAITH IN LIFE CONQUERS PESSIMISM

Jesus further mastered ultimate pessimism by living the kind of life that justified itself. No other person ever gave himself more devotedly to the reformation of the world and the redeeming of men than Jesus. Every person who hopes to change the world for the better, needs to look to Jesus for both guidance and inspiration. However, Jesus had an inner sufficiency. He never said that if he were not able to change the heart of the Pharisees in his generation he would lose faith in God. He never intimated that the sin of Judas affected the conviction of his mind. He never admitted that the political corruption of the Roman empire made him a pessimist. He stood against every evil; he literally lost his life in the effort to change the world. But in spite of these efforts that failed—more properly, because of them—he attained unto a peace with God that justified his life.

Have you noticed that the women and men who give themselves devotedly to the reconstruction of the world are the last ones to admit pessimism when the world proves ungrateful and unruly? There are many pessimists about the missionary enterprise today, but most of them are people who never believed very deeply in the missionary program of the church and who never did very much to further it. But ask the missionaries who have stayed on in China through the Japanese invasion what they think of Christian missions. And when they have told you that they believe so much in it that they want to give the rest of their days to it, ask them what they think of life itself. And you will hear a testimony about the love and peace of God.

GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE SURE

Furthermore, Jesus conquered his ultimate pessimism by his understanding of the judgment of God. What might have seemed to some a pessimistic prophecy was in reality a proclamation that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Then he prophesied its destruction. That which is not of God cannot stand. It breaks asunder because God wills it so. God requires that we live within the boundaries of his will. Men break through those boundaries only to be plunged to destruction. So we may believe that the evil cannot go on. Only when we build on the foundation of Christ will the structure stand.

Keep in mind that we have been discussing ultimate pessimism. We are concerned, deeply concerned, about the defense of our Christian and democratic inheritance. But we have seen that there is something more alarming than the possibility that our land and our institutions might be overwhelmed by the forces of paganism: it is that a lower value has been placed upon the things that we want to see defended at all costs. Christianity can master this ultimate pessimism by its convictions, by its evaluation of man, by leading us into the kind of living that justifies itself, and by proclaiming the judgments of God. Christianity's faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

Easter Joy

I, TOO, O Christ, denied you,
And felt the dawn-winds blow
Cold and gray upon my cheek,
And heard the cock's loud crow;

I, too, sat silent while the scribes
With cynic wisdom tried,
Buffeted, reviled and mocked,
Condemned you—crucified.

But I have seen the dead arise,
The spring wake fair and strong;
And doubt has changed to soaring faith,
Despair to song.

DAISY CONWAY PRICE.

The Answer to Our Fears

By William E. Brooks

How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Psalm 13:2.

Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Luke 24:5-6.

THE note we have always associated with Easter is a note of triumph. Christ had won the victory over the last and worst of man's enemies, and our hearts exulted at the thought that under his leadership all man's enemies would be overcome. So all the music of the day was the music of triumph. I remember five years ago hearing, when it was Easter evening here but Easter morning there, a glorious Te Deum sung by the monks as their matin song in an old monastery in the Austrian mountains. Over the mountains it came, over the seas, ecstatic, exultant, and it seemed to me as I listened that it was prophetic of the day that was to be when all the world would sing his praise who was the Lord of the Easter victory. The halls of that old monastery are filled today with German wounded, and death instead of life seems dominant in the world. A verse of A. E. Housman's seems more in our mood than a Te Deum:

> On the idle hills of summer,
> Sleepy with the flow of streams,
> Far I hear the steady drummer
> Drumming like a noise in dreams.
>
> Far and near, and low and louder,
> On the roads of earth go by,
> Dear to friends, and food for powder,
> Soldiers marching, all to die.

Death seems, for the while, the master of life. So that at this Easter there is a chance that there shall be little of triumph in our thoughts, except it be of the triumph of evil in the world. The cry more often on our lips is that of the psalmist: "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?" It is a cry that men have cried over many centuries, a cry that breaks out often in Holy Writ as men despair of the ways of God, the God who seems to sit in heaven watching the vast tragedy of earth and doing nothing. It is like "the burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see: O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear? even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save?"

WHEN GOD SEEMS SILENT

There are few things harder to endure than the slowness of Providence and the silences of God. This is true at all times. It is especially true of days calamitous like these. How long, we ask ourselves, are we to go on praying "Thy Kingdom come" only to see the wicked in greater power? How long are our lives and our children's lives to be the pawns of the bitter gods of war as they play the desperate game of empire—old, it seems, as the sun, and never ending?

The morning's mail brings a letter from a young mother such as many are writing: "Do you think this mess will be cleared up this time? Or will things start all over again in fifteen or twenty years when Bill is of age?" We understand exactly what she is thinking. Many of us have wanted desperately to build a better world. We have given thought and time and effort to the point of sacrifice toward its achievement, only to see the stiff, obdurate stuff of humanity refusing any other way than the way that leads to blood and tears. "Why does not God help," we ask again and

William E. Brooks

again, "since man will not?" And there is always the danger if we hold the mood long enough that our despair may take the fatal leap to doubt, doubt even of God. So it is a good thing that just now, after the black winter of fear and darkness, Easter comes with the answer we are seeking. For it tells us how God did and does answer our despair and our doubt.

We should be grateful to those who passed on to us the record of that strange intervention of God in human perplexities that they told the tale of that first Easter with the shadows in it as well as the sun. The shadows that had begun to fall over the hearts of the disciples with that sudden arrest in the Garden grew deeper as they turned their backs on Calvary, and stumbled through the streets of Jerusalem, suddenly grown alien. So dark were they in the days that followed, hidden away somewhere, listening for the hostile step of the guard at the door, that they who tell their tale give not even a whisper of the things that happened, of the thoughts that held them. Not until the

third day, apparently, did they venture forth, and then only to finish the task, hastily begun that Friday night, of the preparation of the dead.

Again we find the shadows as Mark begins the story: "Very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." There was no question in their minds what they would find there as they held the spices in their hands. Only one question disturbed them: "Who should roll away the stone?" When they saw the stone was gone "they were affrighted." When they heard that "he is not here, he is risen," they were still more affrighted, and trembling and amazed they ran from the tomb as three days before they ran from Calvary. "Neither said they anything to any man, for they were afraid." I am glad Mark told us that just as he did.

'A DEAD WORLD'S WINTER MORN'

Take that other story that Luke tells of the two who took the road to Emmaus that very evening. Again, how deep lie the shadows over that story, a story of crushing defeat of high and valorous hopes: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." So deep and dark the doubt that held them that they could not believe the woman's word that he was risen. I remember once as I was reading this story that I turned in my Tennyson to that picture of man's despair which he draws, as the good Sir Bedivere stands on the shore watching the dark barge that carried away his King with the tide:

> Long stood Sir Bedivere
> Revolving many memories, till the hull
> Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
> And on the mere the wailing died away.
> But when the moon had passed for evermore,
> The stillness of the dead world's winter morn
> And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,
> Amazed him, and he groaned, "The King is gone."
> "From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

That is what the disciples thought that evening of that Easter day. Spring was in the air as they took the Emmaus road, but "the stillness of a dead world's winter morn" was in their hearts. They had dreamed a dream of a finer earth, of the Kingdom of God, with Jesus himself to lead them into the new day. And now he was gone.

GOD CARES!

That was the world of the first Easter, a world of dark despair. Shadows over the little circle who had left all to follow him, whose hopes had risen and now were done. Shadows—and growing deeper over larger circles of the greater world. *"Pulvis et umbra et nihil"* was the tale of life as many had come to believe it. And then—he came back from the grave, and Mary saw him! And when the doors were shut, still shut for fear of the Jews, he stood in their midst. He followed them to Galilee where they had gone to get their bearings, in that brave endeavor to try to understand what it all meant, this most astonishing tale ever told to men, this most amazing fact ever seen of men—"He is risen!"

You can—as men have—invent many tales. But not that! And not men surely in such situation as the Gospels describe after Calvary. They were in no mind for invention, only for fear. No, this is not a story of what man or men could do. As Winifred Kirkland puts it: "An incredible result implies an incredible cause." And despite all the wit of the centuries that has tried to explain away the resurrection story it still stands. It has affected more lives, changed more history than all the laws and might of Rome—this tale that when first told had all the odds against it. Something beyond the ordinary lay behind it. It could only be God. And if God, then he is not the dull insensate God that our fears depict as sitting on the throne of the world.

So God does care! So he does come into human life to lift, reach out in our times of fear to steady us! We do not have to write over the tale of our struggles those bitter words with which Thomas Hardy brought the most tragic of his stories to an end: "The President of the Immortals has finished his sport with Tess." No, he is not that kind of God, for in the darkest hour, when hope was gone, he brought the glory of the Easter morn. Here is something to fling in the face of the world's despair. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy holy one to see corruption."

THE IMPERATIVE PRESENCE

Yes, it is well that Easter comes just when it does. In one of those amazing essays which he published under the title *Amid These Storms,* Winston Churchill has this to say: "There never was a time when the inherent virtue of human beings required more strong and confident expression in daily life; there never was a time when the hope of immortality and the disdain of earthly power and achievement were more necessary for the safety of the children of men." Wise words those, for the man who holds the hope of immortality in his heart cannot be dismayed. He is drawing life from deep sources. He has found the answer to the world's despair and to the forces that induce despair in the God who brought him into being and will keep him—ever!

And with that held in the heart these fear-creating events among which we live assume their proper places. They pale into nothingness beside the thing that happened in Joseph's garden that morning, and its implications. Because they could not find him the disciples understood the implications of the question at the tomb: "Why seek ye the Living among the dead?" The Living! Then he was something more than they had ever dreamed. Then he would be with them always, even as he had said. So fear vanishes from their story. For he who came from the tomb as the gray dawn broke was the Victor beside whom the conquerors of history, the disturbers of life, were, to use the prophet's figure, "as grasshoppers."

This they knew, when they stood before kings. So today, even amid the smoke of the guns, we can see the imperative Presence, bidding us not to fear, but to follow. And he will be here when the guns are gone.

The Pioneer of Life

By Robert Lincoln Kelley

You killed the Pioneer of life. Acts 3:15 (Moffatt).

DR. MOFFATT gives us a very true and novel interpretation of the mission of Jesus in his translation of this text: "You killed the Pioneer of life." And the Moravian translation affords us another in an additional text, related to this in thought, in which, in place of the familiar wording of the annunciation to Mary that she is to be the mother of our Lord reading, "Behold his kingdom shall have no end," this is given, "His kingdom shall have no frontier."

The pioneer in his adventuring is always and ever upon the frontiers of life. He qualifies as pioneer there. And his function is to push out those same frontiers for those who come after him. So Jesus is seen pushing back the horizons, pushing out the frontiers of men until, in very truth, it may be said, "His kingdom has no frontier." And so we see him in the realm of men's attitudes pushing out the doubts which dismay and destroy for the faith that builds, pushing out the prejudices which divide for the love that unites, pushing out the fears which depress for the hope that delights and delivers, and pushing out death which would seem to be an end for life with a new beginning.

We are profoundly conscious of a world which has so much of pain and heartache and misery, so much of cruelty and hate and persecution, so much of bafflement and bewilderment: "this madhouse which we call civilization." Why not be as profoundly conscious this Easter of the message the Risen Christ can bring us—that message which is the more luminous since we discover it against the black back-drop of skies revealing the clouds of war and a night the blackest the human race has ever known? The darker the night, the more we appreciate the dawn when it comes. Thus Easter under present-day pressures and tensions may bring us an even greater impression, if our hearts be open, than has ever been ours as we as individuals, as a people, as a nation, as a world see in Jesus Christ the Pioneer of Life; as such, blotting out for us all hate, all prejudice, all ignorance until all frontiers of the mind have been obliterated.

There are many lessons for us here today. We think of three. The Pioneer, in wiping out frontiers, brings those following him to a place where (1) Fear yields to Hope; where (2) Living becomes Life; where (3) Dying is not Death.

I

Where Fear Gives Place to Hope. And alas! there is so much of sodden, desperate fear today. But we should not be oblivious to the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" who walks the pathway of the suffering multitude and says to one and all today that which he said to them in that distant day, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." That oldtime prophecy of him remember, "And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, as a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shelter of a rock in a weary land." He is all that and more to distressed folk who trust him. He is that in all war-stricken countries. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait I say on the Lord." That is the valid testimony of a Christian faith under the most untoward conditions where fear has to give place to hope and "a hope that maketh not ashamed."

Is that your hope today, no matter what fret of human circumstances attacks your peace of mind? If you have that, count yourself rich even though you may be poor in pocket. Real riches, after all, are found in

Robert Lincoln Kelley

the heart and never in strong boxes or mere things. "The poorest man in the world is the man who has a lot to live on and nothing to live for." Remember that "except we have that within us that reaches up to that which is above us we yield to that which is around us." God forbid that we should yield to that around us in this hour of cynicism, of despair, of the philosophy of defeatism which would engulf us were we not vigilant. Now is the time, in this hour of fear and moral blackout, to have the upreach to that which is above us, to God Almighty, who in that far-off and first Easter once and for all revealed himself in the Risen Christ. Thank God if your heart this day reveals that upreach his way. Do not stifle that urge. Nurture it.

We are not asking here this hour, in this fellowship of men and women drawn together from many homes, whether you be Catholic or Protestant or "those of no name or sign." We are not primarily interested in that. But we are saying that if you would nurture that

upreach of your inner life toward the life of God, may God bless you to tie up to some regular place of worship of Almighty God; find some church, seek out some faithful minister or priest or rabbi, make him your confidant, find in him your earthly shepherd. Keep your home fires burning. Give God a chance at your heart.

II

Pioneering Where Living Is Life. Where living becomes vastly more than mere existence, the basis upon which so many are today in our sorry world, economically, mentally, socially, physically, spiritually and every other way. Jesus said one day to such what he says to us now, "I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." We speak of salvation through him as one commits himself to him and thereafter lives Christ's way. Have we ever fully enough sensed what that word salvation may cover as his basis of living really becomes our basis? Surely more than an emotional spasm. Rather a complete integration of the human personality in its world of relationships, a life made complete, body, mind and spirit. As one has said, "Man never lives in every department of his being until he becomes Christian and then he simply begins to live." Saved to himself for time and for eternity; and more than that, becoming a saving factor in society, becoming a better husband, father, neighbor, citizen, employer, employee.

When Easter recurs each year I wonder whether we have not somehow seen in its message but a single dimensional interpretation as Jesus comes back from the grave and reveals immortality: this as demonstrated in his person and as the possible experience of those who follow him. I wonder if we have not rung the changes upon the everlastingness of life as thus revealed. It is everlasting, make no mistake about that. It is no less that, but it is vastly more than that. This has to do with something more than the mere dimensional prolongation of living or existence. Other dimensions are involved which make for solidity and cubical contents. The test of this living is not its duration, its endlessness, its quantity, though it is all that: rather its quality, the kind of life it promises and demonstrates. Mere existence made continuous would be intolerable; but existence raised to the plane of living—living in God's plan and on his plane—that becomes an entirely different matter. That lifts it from mere tedium to that point where Te Deums flood the soul with song and fill living with satisfaction.

III

Pioneering to Where Dying Is Never Death. They came to find Jesus among the dead. They found an open tomb. They heard with joy these words: "He is not here: he is risen as he said." He had pioneered through the shadows enveloping the place of death to that road which lay beyond it. Have we not accepted as a truism the poet's word, "That bourne from which no traveler returns"? That frontier was forever conquered when the great Traveler, Jesus Christ, did return. And that way through which he pioneered is the way he points for us. "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life." In terms of entering into life, on his plan, we may face what we mortals call death and know with a knowledge nothing and no one may ever gainsay, that dying is never death. "Death could not hold him," the Scripture reveals, and it cannot hold us as we follow where he leads.

It is this fact that underlies Victor Hugo's significant heading for that final chapter of *Les Misérables* in which he tells of the dying hero, Jean Valjean: "A Night Behind Which Is Day." It is that fact that underlies his other statement: "Death is not a cul de sac, a blind alley: it is a thoroughfare: it closes on the twilight, it opens on the dawn." What a transformation this fundamental lesson of Easter brings to our cemeteries where lies the dreamless dust of our precious dead who died yet who lived ere what we call death took place, in faith in the only begotten Son of God! When living is life, dying is never death, but new life.

In a session of a great Christian convention in Denver years ago there were featured those of various Indian tribes in the United States among whom Christian work had borne its inevitable results. A Crow Indian woman, a blanket Indian from the Crow Indian Agency, Mrs. Kittie Deer Nose, spoke. A vast audience that day was thrilled as this simple, splendid Indian woman spoke through the amplifier closing her testimony to the Christian faith with this statement, "Thank God that while we all have to die we do not all have to die forever." Human personality persists in the plan and power of God. Jesus became the Pioneer where death is never an end but a new beginning. If living is life, dying is never death.

Last evening we went to slumber under the shadows and the pall of night, shadows which may have expressed for us the fears, the blackout of life's charm until it became for us but mere dragged-out existence and the hopelessness of death. This morning we stirred early from our beds ere the dawn came peeping over the mountains to the east, and foregathered on this hilltop at the break of this Easter day. Thank God that we may put that night forever behind us. Thank God that in the Christian faith, given by this pioneering Christ, we may cross the frontiers of fear and hopelessness and leap the barrier that seems to divide death from life. Thank God that there is "a night behind which is day."

And so may we take new courage for life's tasks. A certain ship seemed to be the plaything of the wind and wave driven to its doom on the heaving, tossing sea. The passengers were in terror and panic—all save one, a lad whom they discovered calmly reading in the cabin. And one of those frightened folk accosted him: "Why, you do not seem afraid. You do not seem to sense our danger. Are you not afraid as we are?" "Afraid?" said the lad, "why should I be afraid—my father's hand is on the wheel." Our ship these days indeed is on a tempest-driven sea and there is a terrible storm upon the deep. But just remember that our Father's hand is on the helm. We may trust him. He will bring our ship into port.

Beyond the Immediate

By Vernon B. Richardson

Out of my distress I called upon the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me in a large place. Psalm 118:5.

ONE cold, dark midnight in October 1939 I was aboard a small, all but discarded Dutch steamer as she stole away from the port of Rotterdam, Holland, and turned her snub nose toward the fortified coasts of England. Before us, at best, were twenty-four hours of nervous sailing across the treacherous North Sea. Underneath us were deadly mines, many of them torn loose from their moorings and floating around us like angry sharks daring to be touched. Above us, perhaps, were German bombing planes. If you have never tried to sleep in circumstances like those, plus being wrapped in a life preserver, you can at least imagine the difficulties. Most of us, consequently, passed the night in the dining room drinking coffee and swapping stories.

Just before daybreak as I was standing on the deck for a bit of air a British destroyer came out of the darkness and quickly drew alongside us. I heard the commander as he called to our captain through a megaphone and warned him that we were headed directly toward a mine. "Change your course," he said, "and follow me." I need not tell you that we did. About two hours later the destroyer signaled again and said, in effect: "Go ahead now, you can make it alone. We are turning back to help someone else." About ten o'clock that night we landed safely at a little English port, quaintly called, after the British fashion, Gravesend!

For some strange reason the thrill of that trip came back the other day when a slender verse of Scripture called out of the darkness and seemed to say to me: "Change your course, follow me. I can help you through this danger." Here is the verse—the verse of our text: "Out of my distress I called upon the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me in a large place."

In those words there is no intimation at all that God will deliver us quickly from our distress. No Christian would ask for that. We do not desire that our religion should coddle us into believing that all is peace. All is not peace. All is war. Faith in God never shuts our eyes; it opens them. Faith in God never eliminates difficulties; it gives us power to meet them. You will note, however, that the experience of the psalmist does suggest that if in our distress we call upon God he will answer our prayer, and will set us in a large place.

That last phrase particularly intrigues us—"He will set us in a large place." One suspects that our chief need today is not to be assured that in the near future we will not have to suffer, that our cities will not be bombed, our homes split, our loved ones injured, our luxuries curtailed. Surely there is no one under heaven who can guarantee us that. Rather, we perceive that our chief need is to see our troubles against a larger background, to be lifted out of our small places where we see only death, destruction, hate and headlines to a larger place where we may get a true perspective of our admittedly lamentable situation.

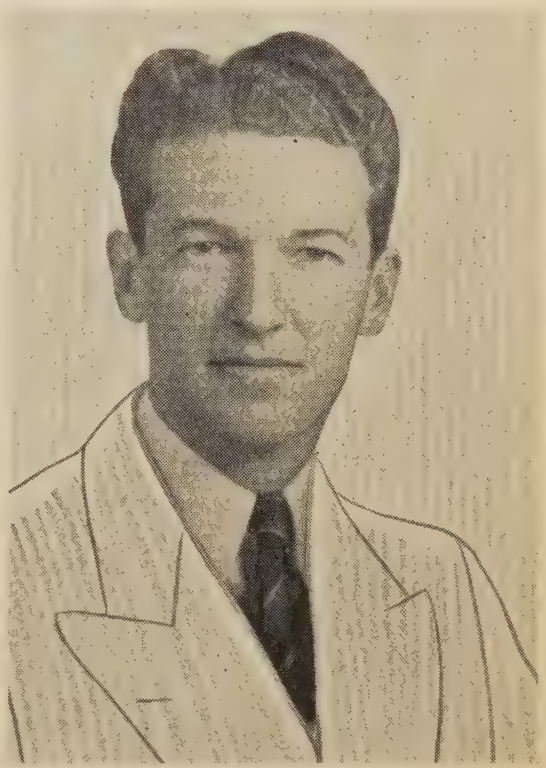
In short, our text suggests that if we will call upon God he will hear us and lift us out of our own small selves and give us a larger view, a longer vision that sees beyond the immediate.

From that larger place in which a calm trust in God puts us I suggest that we shall be able to discern at least three facts that will come to us with reassuring strength through the terror of battle and the tears of home.

I

First of all, from that large place we can see that it is in times of distress that *heroism finds its grandest opportunity.*

Thomas Carlyle said that the ultimate question which each of us must answer is: "Will you be a hero



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or a coward?" The sad fact is that most of us go through life without ever answering the question one way or the other. But times of distress, be they personal or national, force the issue upon us and give us our greatest opportunity to prove to ourselves that we are, at heart, heroes.

Have you ever yearned to know whether you are a hero or a coward? Have you ever stood on a bathing beach and had this wild thought flash through your mind: I almost wish someone would get in trouble out there in the water that I may prove to myself that I have the courage to go out and rescue him? Have you ever sat in a crowded theater and thought, just for a moment: If this building should catch fire would I act heroically or cowardly? Have you ever stood by the bed of one who was about to undergo a serious operation and said to yourself, "I almost wish I had the chance myself to prove that I can face death as bravely

as he." I believe that these are not aberrations of my mind but indications of a desire we all have to know for a certainty the kind of stuff of which we are made.

There are many fine things that can be passed on from one generation to another, and I suppose that no generation in history has inherited more than ours. But there is one good thing which cannot be handed to us freely; each of us must win it for himself. That is, strength of spirit. Out of struggle, conflict and distress it comes. "That which is born in the fire will not fade in the sun." I read recently of the brave life of Dr. R. T. Vann of North Carolina whose trust in God set him in so large a place that he was able to see great personal distress as a permanent invitation to heroic achievement. Losing both hands in a cane mill before he reached his teens, this indomitable person so mastered himself that he was graduated at twenty-two from Wake Forest College at the head of his class. He went on to become an eminent teacher, college president and author. At the peak of his career his eyes failed him so that he was never able to read again. Yet for a generation he kept ahead of his day and never lost his buoyancy of spirit or charm of manner. His friends gave him the picturesque title, "The Wingless Eagle of Carolina." Dr. Vann died last summer at the age of ninety with the blessed assurance that though his life was one long distress he never failed to play the hero.

All life is a battlefield for the spirit. But now the battlefield has become more than a figure of speech. It is a bloody fact. You and I did not want this war; we would have avoided it if we could; it is a horrible, shameful thing; it puts our souls in great distress. And yet out of that very distress in which the exigencies of our day plunge us the heroism that lies latent within will find its greatest opportunity.

II

And secondly, if we will lift our hearts and eyes to God and allow him to set us in a large place, we will not only see that in times of distress heroism finds its greatest opportunity but also that *hope finds its fullest expression.*

Whosoever considers himself to have everything his heart desires is apt to lack the one thing that his life needs most—and that is hope. Without hope we can live only in the faded glories of the past or amid the waning pleasures of the present. New worlds are found not out of complacency but out of hope.

We have more cause today to hope for a better world than any generation before us. The Christian fellowship throughout the world, even across the lines of battle, is stronger than ever since the coming of Christ. Never have men so hated war as today. Other generations have taken it for granted or have followed it as a deliberate policy. Our attitude is just the opposite: We regard it as a monstrous evil that can be cured, and our chief purpose as a people is to establish a just and durable peace.

Never has the world been so concerned over the plight of the poor as today. Never have we so worked for the welfare of children. Never have we so recognized the rights of women. Never has decency been so widely applauded, or filth so generally despised, as now, in these dark times.

There is indeed more cause for hope today than ever before and in our present distress hope, far from perishing, will find its fullest expression.

III

Again, if we will put our trust in God he will set us in a large place where we can see that it is in times of distress that *holiness finds its greatest reward.*

A Pastoral Prayer

By James Croswell Perkins

ETERNAL GOD, our loving Father, again we would come into Thy presence seeking that feeling of at-home-ness in this mysterious world which only Thou canst give. Again would we renew the springs of our devotional life through prayer and scripture and song.

We give Thee hearty thanks for the many blessings which we often take for granted but which are so real —the comfort and encouragement of those whom we love and who hold us to our best; the gifts of food, fresh air and sleep; the inspiration we get from people who are braver than we are. Above all we thank Thee for the healing, ennobling influences that stream forth from Jesus Christ; for his power to strengthen our wills, cleanse our affections, enlarge our sympathies. Help us to learn in our own experience the transforming power of his friendship and the supreme value of acknowledging him as Lord of life. Help us to renew our loyalty to him this day.

When we feel tense, teach us to rest our minds in the thought of Thy power and love; when we feel tired and weary, may we remember Jesus' invitation, "Come unto me and I will refresh you"; when doubts oppress our minds, may the spirit of the Christ increase our faith. Some of us are lonely; give us the assurance that Thou art the Unseen Companion of our common life. Some of us are discouraged; like David of old, may we encourage ourselves in the thought of our God. Some of us are tempted; in our times of testing may the quiet strength of Jesus keep our wills strong. Some of us are afraid; we have forgotten how the Master said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Great God and Father of us all, grant us the assurance that we can get the best of every problem that confronts us and that we may become more than conquerors through Jesus Christ, our Lord. In his name we pray. Amen.

In the early days of our nation leading up to Valley Forge and Yorktown, Thomas Paine wrote: "These are the times which try men's souls." And these days may be likened unto those. They try our souls. They put to the test our spirits.

As Ignatius of Antioch marched to Rome to be torn to bits by the lions, he threw back his head and said: "Now I begin to be a disciple." Is that not the greatest reward that can come to a life of holiness—to be presented with an opportunity to express conclusively one's supreme loyalty to Jesus Christ? That is the great reward; the salvation of our souls is the happy by-product.

Once a college lad was humiliated beyond words when he fell from sheer exhaustion very near the end of a grueling race. But the wise coach turned shame into pride when he said to the boy: "You have done something which I have always wanted to be able to do myself. You have given your fullest measure of strength without even an unconscious reservation. The ability to do that is worth more than the ability to win the race." Could the boy have hoped for a better reward?

This is not a time for us to experiment timidly with the great issues of religion and morality. We must give our best or nothing. Caution is cheap; bargaining is deplorable; compromise will not be tolerated. If we wish to test whether or not an ideal is worth living for we can find out only by living for it, without reserve. This has always been the call of Jesus to those who would accept his standards: All or nothing. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

These distressful days through which we are passing call for every ounce of your courage, for all of your nobility of character, for your strongest faith, your widest compassion, your deepest love. Anything less is worse than nothing.

Go forward in the assurance that Christians have always been most Christian when put to the severest tests. The pages of Christian history are bound with a crimson thread. The world can do nothing to Christianity that has not already been tried, except to live it. To dwell in the mansion of these solemn truths is to dwell in a large place.

Will you let God set you there?

Timely Verse

Gambler

AND sitting down, they watched Him there,
The soldiers did;
There, while they played with dice,
He made His sacrifice,
And died upon the Cross to rid
God's world of sin.

He was a gambler, too, my Christ,
He took His life and threw
It for a world redeemed.
And ere His agony was done,
Before the westering sun went down,
Crowning that day with crimson crown,
He knew that He had won.

G. A. Studdert-Kennedy.

The Man Christ

HE built no temple, yet the farthest sea
Can yield no shore that's barren of his place
For bended knee.

He wrote no book, and yet his words and prayer
Are intimate on many myriad tongues,
Are counsel everywhere.

The life he lived has never been assailed,
Nor any precept, as he lived it, yet
Has ever failed.

He built no kingdom, yet a King from youth
He reigned, is reigning yet; they call his realm
The kingdom of the Truth.

Therese Lindsey.

Quatrain

CHRIST bears a thousand crosses now
Where once but one He bore;
Each cruel deed unto His brow
Adds one thorn more.

Charles G. Blanden.

The Face of Jesus Christ

IS this the face that thrills with awe
Seraphs who veil their face above?
Is this the face without a flaw,
The face that is the face of love?

Yea, this defaced, a lifeless clod,
Hath all creation's love sufficed,
Hath satisfied the love of God,
This face, the face of Jesus Christ.

Christina Rossetti.

Christ Is Crucified Anew

NOT only once, and long ago,
There on Golgotha's side,
Has Christ, the Lord, been crucified
Because He loved a lost world so.
But hourly souls, sin-satisfied,
Mock His great love, flout His commands.
And I drive nails deep in His hands,
You thrust the spear within His side.

John Richard Moreland.

These poems are selected from the new anthology, *Poems for Life*, by Thomas Curtis Clark, and are used with permission of the publishers, Willett, Clark & Co.

The Minister's Use of Literature

By James D. Morrison

MARK TWAIN said: "The classics are the books everybody talks about and nobody reads." During the years since this ironic half-truth was first uttered there has arisen a generation that neither reads the classics nor talks about them. The other day a teacher in one of our most progressive high schools asked his class how many had read John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. No one could recall ever having heard of Bunyan or his Pilgrim. This is a distinct loss. As Walter Lippmann has pointed out, the great weakness of our civilization is that the educators have pulled out the universals, have turned away from the classics, especially the Bible, and have left us without any unifying philosophy to give education and life direction and significance. The "lost generation" is the generation that turned from the fixed stars of our literary firmament to follow will o' the wisps, evanescent "best-sellers," that have already yielded up their flickering rays.

Whatever others do, the preacher cannot afford to yield to these transient moods. He, of all men, must keep his eyes on the ultimates. Especially in an age of confusion such as the present does it behoove him to maintain an acquaintance with those works which have guided and inspired men through the changing years and, tested by time, have proved their right to be trusted.

● *Great Preachers and the 'Ultimate'*

The great preachers have done this. Glancing over sermons by outstanding ministers here and abroad, one is impressed by the frequency with which references to literature occur. Consider, for instance, such homiletical anthologies as James Marchant's *British Preachers,* Harold Young's *Great Canadian Preaching,* J. Fort Newton's *Best Sermons, 1924—,* Harper's Monthly Pulpit of fifty volumes by well known American preachers. It would be difficult, if indeed possible, to find a single discourse without some reference to literature, especially classic literature. Strange as it may seem, a comparison of these sermons with a collection of representative American and English sermons published over fifty years ago reveals a more frequent use of poetry and literature in present-day preaching than was common a half-century ago.

But this does not imply that the pulpit masters of other days were less at home with the great poets and novelists, especially the great poets. As Professor Lewis Brastow pointed out in his study of the modern pulpit: "Without Coleridge, Wordsworth, Carlyle and Tennyson, we should never have had the Frederick Robertson we know, the most characteristic representative of the historical, critical, literary, not to say philosophical and scientific, influences of the age, that appeared in the English pulpit during the last century. Nor should we be able otherwise to account for

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some of our most influential modern American preachers." Certainly Phillips Brooks and Horace Bushnell reveal a deep culture to which literature made its contribution, and if Henry Ward Beecher did not quote poetry, it was for the same reason that he rarely quoted Scripture verbatim—he was not endowed with a verbal memory.

● *Religion and Great Literature*

Literature and religion are old friends. Indeed, it would seem that literature began not as an art to be loved for its own sake, but as the handmaiden of religion. The men who wrote the Old Testament manuscripts were not interested in composing fine phrases and balanced sentences. They did not say: "Come now, let us write a masterpiece, perchance a 'best seller.'" They wrote because they had something to say, and achieved the heights of great literature because they so completely forgot themselves in their message. This is true not only of the great masters of Hebrew literature but also of those who composed the Babylonian hymns in celebration of Marduk and the other gods of the ancient world. Likewise the earliest literature of India and of Greece sprang into being through the inspiration of religion.

Of the many interests which engage the attention of mankind, religion has always been among the most vital and persistent. Since this is true, it is but natural that literature, the interpreter of life, should make religion a frequent theme and that the greatest works which have come down to us should be such classics of faith as Homer's *Iliad,* Virgil's *Aeneid,* Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables,* Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra,* Thompson's *Hound of Heaven,* Masefield's *Everlasting Mercy,* etc.

● *Literature Must Interpret Life*

Indeed, one might almost go so far as to say that all *great* literature presupposes a religious interpretation of life—a belief "in the ultimate decency of things"—to use R. L. Stevenson's striking phrase. There must be some purpose in the universe, some plot or plan, else how can one consistently attempt to unravel the tangled skein of being and present a reasoned and ordered interpretation? Even the sordid and tragic happenings which seem so inexplicable must have a meaning which will become evident in the conclusion. In the short story, the novel and the epic, the triumphant denouement always follows the most breathless complication of distressing circumstances. So it must be in the story of mankind, if it is to be a *story* at all. Truth may seem

> forever on the scaffold,
> Wrong forever on the throne—
> Yet that scaffold sways the future,
> and, behind the dim unknown,
> Standeth God within the shadow,
> keeping watch above his own.

In saying that, I am quite aware of the fashion which has prevailed between the two great wars of sneering at faith and playing up the futilities, the frustrations, the meaningless tragedies of life. "The modern novel," someone said, "begins with a yawn and ends with a headache." This note of frustration is a reflection of the prevailing materialism which has now come to its day of judgment. With God thrown over, there was of course no deep purpose or inner meaning to give life significance. If literature is to reflect life, it will naturally reflect

the life which we behold—without purpose or meaning. "One reason for the great poverty of art today," said Katherine Mansfield, "is that artists have no great religion and are, in the words of the Bible, 'sheep without a shepherd.' "

The true artists, especially the true poets, are men of faith, for while they see the grim tragedy and sordidness of life they see also beyond the tragedy and sordidness the inner beauty and promise of the dawn. To the materialist the earth may be a "cosmic accident," but the true poet sings of that

one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.

To be sure, literature does not always ascribe to the Power behind the universe the titles by which we know him best. Yet it is impossible for it to escape the assumption of a Presence in whom we all "live and move and have our being."

● *Great Friends in Great Books*

Even a meager acquaintance with literature promises large dividends to the preacher. The most important, as we have suggested, consists in the contribution which it stands ready to make toward the enlargement of the minister's thought and personality. For, before the minister can make literature a real asset in preaching, he must first make it a part of himself. From the shelves of our libraries what a glorious company of friendly and immortal spirits look down upon us! Shakespeare, holding in his hand the key to the human heart; Dante, whose soul has pilgrimaged to Hell and back again; Bunyan, whom even prison could not silence; Milton, whose blind eyes penetrated the Gates of Heaven; Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Walt Whitman, Longfellow, Masefield and how many others! To live in such an environment is to feel one's self the heir of all the ages, to have innumerable influences pouring into life, stimulating the mind, broadening the sympathies, enlarging the outlook.

Of special value to the preacher is the discipline in literary style which the study of great books affords. It is inevitable that if the experience of the preacher be enlarged and deepened, his sermons also will be enlarged and deepened. Almost unconsciously his vocabulary will be enriched, his style purified, his sentences strengthened. It is popular in some quarters to sneer at style as so much superficial veneer, but literary beauty is more than skin deep. Speaking of style, let us recall the transparent clearness, beauty and force of Jesus' words.

● *Style a Quality of Good Preaching*

As one studies sermonic literature one is impressed with the fact that that which makes the difference between the commonplace and the great is often simply a matter of style, "the little more," which transforms the dull into the interesting and vital. A nationally famous preacher who has taught homiletics in an outstanding theological seminary for the past twenty years says that one of the things which depress him most is the lack of acquaintance with English literature on the part of so many students who come up from our schools and colleges to train for the ministry. This lack, I am convinced, is one of the causes of flat, prosaic, uninspiring sermons. While the message is the chief thing, the language in which it is clothed is not to be despised. Certainly, we ought to feel that nothing is too good for the gospel, and we ought to strive to commend it to an enlightened generation by presenting it in the best language and style we can command. No one would accuse the Apostle Paul of an undue interest in literature, yet note the classic quality of his sermon to the Athenians on Mars Hill, in which he even quotes a line of poetry from the Greek poet, Aratus.

Among the more immediate uses of literature to the preacher are: the "book sermon," the "biographical sermon" and the use of literature as a source of illustrations. The importance and appeal of the book sermon, in which the preacher frankly makes some novel or poem the subject of his discourse, is not as great today as it has been at other times, yet, if well done, it still possesses possibilities. Splendid examples of really inspiring sermons of this character are to be found in such volumes as *Spiritual Voices in Modern Literature* by Trevor T. Davies; *The Gospel in Modern Poetry* by Hugh T. Kerr; *Not by Eastern Windows Only* by W. A. Cameron; *Great Books as Life Teachers* by Newell Dwight Hillis; *The Classics of the Soul's Quest* by Welsh; *There are Sermons in Books* by Stidger; and *The Voice of Books* by Moldenhawer.

● *Biographical and Book Sermons*

This type of sermon offers yet another way to challenge people with the gospel—another avenue of approach into their hearts and minds. While the prophet of religion must never deteriorate into a high priest of literature, he ought surely to use his influence in acquainting people with, and encouraging them to read, the great writings which have formed the basis of so much that is best in our civilization.

Once in a while, a biographical sermon will afford an effective medium for presenting the truth in a graphic and human way. What sermons there are, for instance, in the life stories of characters like St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther, John Milton, John Knox, John Bunyan, John Wesley, Sir Walter Scott, Alfred Tennyson, Abraham Lincoln, Adoniram Judson, Dwight L. Moody, David Livingstone, Leo Tolstoi, Sir Wilfred Grenfell, Jane Addams, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Niemöller and many others!

But literature offers a more important homiletic service than in the so-called book sermon. Once in a while the minister may discuss some great biography, poem or novel, but every Sunday he is preaching sermons in which, whatever his theme, illustrations and poetic quotations can be used to advantage.

● *Illustrations That Illuminate*

A sermon is like a cathedral. The reasoning or the arguments constitute the pillars which sustain the structure. The illustrations are the windows. As beauty, harmony and reverence characterize the stained glass windows of the cathedral and intensify the atmosphere of worship, so these qualities in an illustration add to the effectiveness of the sermon. Herein lies the advantage of the literary illustration over the mere anecdote. The anecdote may supply light; the literary illustration provides not only light, but also an atmosphere of harmony and beauty which enables the imagination the more readily to grasp the thought. And what an inexhaustible supply of illustrations and fitting poetic quotations our English literature offers the preacher! There is scarcely a vital truth of religion which cannot be illumined by some reference to the immortal works which are our common possession. Think of conscience, for instance. What a commentary and what a rich mine of vivid illustrations we have in Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* Tennyson's *Guinevere,* Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter!*

● *Illustrative Value in the Poets*

Even so distinctly religious a theme as immortality we find again and again in the works of the great masters, especially in those of the great poets. The limitations of space prevent enumeration. Indeed the resources are so rich that it would be easier to write a volume than a brief paper. Anyone who is interested will find inspiring and usable material in Thomas Curtis Clark's *1000 Quotable Poems, Poems for Life* and *100 Poems of Immortality,* Caroline M. Hill's *World's Great Religious Poetry* and similar volumes.

As a source of sermon illustrations the field of literature is literally inexhaustible, and if a generation has grown up that neglects the best for the most recent there is a greater obligation for the preacher to make the most of his opportunity.

• WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE •

DURING the past three years Rev. FRED S. BUSCHMEYER has ministered at Mount Pleasant Congregational Church, Washington, D. C. He is a member of the Committee on Religious Life in the Nation's Capital. His education was received at the University of Southern California and Boston U. school of theology.

Rev. DAVID K. BARNWELL has for the past thirteen years ministered at the First Baptist Church, Summit, N. J. He received his A.B. from the University of California and graduated from Union Theological Seminary in 1928.

Following a long pastorate at the Seventh Day Baptist Church, Plainfield, N. J., Dr. AHVA J. C. BOND assumed the deanship of the school of theology at Alfred University, Alfred, N. Y. He is a member of the Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace and of the executive committee of the World Council of Churches.

Rev. HAMPTON ADAMS *has ministered* at Union Avenue Christian Church, St. Louis, Mo., since 1938. For twelve years he was pastor of First Christian Church, Frankfort, Ky. He received his A.B. and B.D. at Transylvania University, Lexington, Ky.

From a long ministry at Allentown, Pa., Rev. WILLIAM E. BROOKS went to his present pastorate at First Presbyterian Church, Morgantown, W. Va.

Rev. ROBERT LINCOLN KELLEY, *having* graduated from the University of Minnesota and the divinity school of the University of Chicago, ministered to a number of Baptist churches and is now engaged in special denominational service on the Pacific coast. His sermon in this issue was preached at a sunrise Easter service on a hilltop near Albany, Calif.

Rev. VERNON B. RICHARDSON *is now in* his first pastorate, Westhampton Baptist Church, Richmond, Va. He received his education at the University of Richmond, Crozer Seminary and Cambridge University, Eng.

Rev. JAMES C. PERKINS *is minister of* the Federated Churches of Schroon Lake, N. Y. He graduated from Princeton University in 1929 with highest honors in philosophy and has B.D. and S.T.M. degrees from Oberlin.

DR. JAMES D. MORRISON *is Cornelius* Woelfkin professor of preaching at Colgate-Rochester divinity school.

TITLES AND TEXTS — What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

WALTER B. CREMEANS, Westminster Presbyterian, Springfield, Ill. "The Priority Rights of Religion." Matt. 6:33a—"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness. . . ."

M. H. LICHLITER, First Congregational, Columbus, O. "On Living Dangerously." Matt. 10:16a—"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves."

GUY C. TETIRICK, University Methodist, Tulsa, Okla. "The Light in the Darkening World." Exod. 10:23—"But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings."

J. E. WAERY, First Congregational, Iowa City, Ia. "Hold Back the Night." Matt. 5:16—"Let your light so shine. . . ."

T. F. GALLAHER, Oak Cliff Presbyterian, Dallas, Texas. "Distinguished Service Award." John 12:26c—"If any man serve me, him will the Father honor."

H. H. SCHOOLEY, Church of the Mediator (Universalist), Providence, R. I. "In Times of Tumult." Hosea 10:12c—"It is time to seek the Lord. . . ."

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

. . . . . .
Title of sermon
. . . . . .
Text used (write out the text)
. . . . . .
Name of minister
. . . . . .
Name of church
. . . . . .
Address

DALE M. LAMBERT, Methodist, Green Camp, O. "What Is God Saying to Our Generation?" Heb. 1:1, 2—"God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

L. E. SCHWARZ, Westminster Presbyterian, Topeka, Kans. "The Fourth Cross." Matt. 16:24—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

W. L. CROWDING, Methodist, Waynesboro, Pa. "The World's Worst Blackout." Matt. 27:45—"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour."

BERNARD N. KING, Church of the Brethren, McPherson, Kan. "The Search for Reality." Col. 2:17—"That was only the shadow of something that was to follow; the reality is found in Christ." (Goodspeed)

CLYDE K. CAMPBELL, Methodist, Las Cruces, N. M. "An Antidote to Despair." Psalm 27:13—"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

ROY L. MCQUISTON, First Methodist, Irwin, Pa. "Total Righteousness Versus Total War." Judg. 5:20—"They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

LEE FLETCHER, First Congregational, Fairport, N. Y. "God's Enduring Order." Dan. 2:44 (Moffatt)—"The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom never to be swept away, with a sovereignty that shall never pass to others; it shall break all these other kingdoms to bits and make an end of them, but it shall stand forever."

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

UNDER the auspices of the Federal Council's special commission to study the bases of a just and durable peace, there was held at Delaware, Ohio, during the first week of March, a conference of more than three hundred delegates from twenty-six church bodies, for the purpose of making articulate the witness of Christian faith as to the kind of world order which should follow the war. Coupling this conference with the great missionary conference at Trenton, N. J., which was the "event" of the previous month, there can be no doubt that something is deeply stirring the spirit of the churches. The Delaware Conference was of one mind as to the church's responsibility to testify to the world and its governments concerning the Christian ideal in the three fields of political, economic and social order. In the first, there was general agreement upon the necessity of setting up some international agency or government invested with certain of the powers now exercised by independent sovereign states, for the purpose of giving final judgment on international controversies, and with command of armed forces of sufficient strength to prevent the outbreak of war. In the second field, the conference declared that the war is a demonstration of the breakdown of the economic system under which the world has been operating, and called for "a new ordering of economic life" which it asserted is imminent by explosive political revolution if it is not brought about by voluntary cooperation. In the third field, it declared that the social life of man will never be the same again, and called for the purging of society of its race and class hostilities by the power of the Christian gospel of brotherhood. These generalizations were implemented in three great documents which deserve most earnest study.

The Delaware Conference

The Book of the Month

FAITH AND NURTURE. *By H. Shelton Smith. Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.00.*

I MAKE no claim to be up to the minute on new books, and therefore make no apology for adopting as the book of this month one that is at least six months off the press. It seems that this book on religious education by Dr. Smith, of Duke University, was a kind of storm center at the recent International Religious Education convention. And no wonder, for it is a frontal attack upon the whole philosophy of religious education which has dominated the leaders of this movement since the turn of the present century. Dr. Smith traces historically the rise of what he calls "liberalism" in this field, and he maintains that great and fundamental Christian conceptions have been sacrificed by the centering of attention upon the child as psychology describes him, rather than as Christian faith conceives him. He claims that "the thought patterns of modern liberal religious nurture have largely exhausted their vitality, and that failure to reconstruct them in terms of a more adequate faith will ultimately result in the collapse, or at least the slow death, of the twentieth century movement of religious education." The psychological basis of Christian education must, he insists, give way to an adequate theological basis in the light of the profounder disclosure of Christian reality which modern theology is giving us. I have been trying to say this same thing for years, and it stirs me deeply to find a scholarly writer who says it better. We are in midstream of a new theological movement. It has many eddies and diversions, but it is surely going in a truer direction than that in which the prevailing psychologism has been taking us. This book is not difficult reading. I commend it for its clarity and grasp.

A Thought for the Month

CORPORATE prayer has not been given its true place in our thought and in the practice of our churches. It is generally felt to be less important than private prayer. This is wrong. Many people are led to say: "I can worship God at home or in the garden or in a trip to the country as well as in the church." The result is that the most central and vital thing in the Christian life, the service of public worship, is being neglected as superfluous. Private prayer is, of course, essential to the Christian life. To neglect it is to rob corporate prayer of its vitality. But corporate prayer is no less essential, and to neglect it causes private prayer either to become self-centered or to wither away in vague sentimentality. When we pray in secret we are always beset by the temptation to assert our own desires as if God had no one to think of but us! Corporate prayer is a check on this temptation. When we pray with others we cannot give full rein to our private desires. And the fact that we cannot do so compels our conscience to challenge their legitimacy. This challenge is itself God's way of revealing his will to us. In the church, the rich and poor meet together, the privileged and the underprivileged, the weak and the strong. This very diversity gives rise to a conflict of desires, a conflict which can be reconciled only in the impartiality of God's fatherhood. When we pray together in the corporate fellowship of brotherly love we are thus often compelled to chasten our private desires and even to pluck out of our hearts some of our private prayers and fling them away as unchristian and impious. No man can discover the will of God in solitude. It is only in fellowship that the Father's will can be made fully known. And what we learn of God's will in corporate prayer we carry back to our closet to enrich and discipline the prayer which we offer in secret.

Private Prayer and Corporate Prayer

Charles Clayton Morrison

NEXT MONTH the NEW PULPIT

Three New Features:

With a view to making the Preacher's Professional Magazine even more useful to its readers, the PULPIT announces the following new departments:

SERMON OUTLINES

In addition to the six full-length sermons each month, the PULPIT will present a page or more of brief sermon outlines—100 words or less—contributed by readers. Pertinent! Timely! (Send *your* outline today!)

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

Answering the continual demand for vivid, out-of-life illustrations for sermons, the PULPIT will provide in each issue a page or more of vivid, helpful illustrations. Brief, illuminating, telling! These also will be contributed by PULPIT readers, and will be welcomed NOW.

CHILDREN'S SERMONS

In every issue a Children's Sermon will be published—the very best that our readers are preaching. These will meet a widely felt need.

AN EVANGELISTIC NUMBER IS BEING PLANNED FOR THIS YEAR

To meet the growing spiritual challenge of the times, a special issue containing six evangelistic sermons, also a children's sermon with the same note, has been planned. This number will appear soon.

In addition to these features, the PULPIT will present a SOUTHERN NUMBER later in the year. Watch for it!

More about the NEW PULPIT

next month

New Books for Today's Problems

PRAYER • **GEORGE A. BUTTRICK**

"Using the findings of psychology, out of a rich experience as a pastor, drawing on the wealth of the scriptures, the author traces the effect of prayer on attention, faith, motive, memory, the subconscious, imagination, thought, and conscience. . . . This is a book for the disheartened minister whose days have lost their lustre and their joy."—*Dr. J. Harry Cotton.* $2.75

How Jesus Dealt With Men

RAYMOND CALKINS • "This is a book that every minister should read. The author has rendered an excellent service in demonstrating through a study of the method of Jesus how the minister can meet the problems which confront men. This is a book of applied psychology in terms of human redemption. It will enable the pastor to find new significance in pastoral visitation and personal counselling."—*Bishop John S. Stamm.* $1.75

The Lord's Prayer **ERNEST F. TITTLE**

"No part of the Bible has been more often written about than the Lord's Prayer; never has it been done with more gripping effectiveness than in this brief glowing book. The petitions of the prayer are used as windows through which to look out on the present scene. Timely and searching!"—*Dr. Halford E. Luccock.* $1

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ANDREW W. BLACKWOOD • The average pastor is neither a giant nor a genius. But he longs to win souls. He wishes counsel based on the experience of other ministers who are successful in evangelistic work today—men who, as Jesus, "come preaching," win recruits for the Kingdom, and nurture them to a living faith in Jesus Christ. Such counsel is found in this volume. $1

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